

we could find many, if necessary, not simply as it applies to the sect named, but to many others.

I have used the example just given, not to criticise at all, but out of good feeling and love which I trust I have toward all. This same thought came to me years ago and was the wedge which opened the way for me into the fuller light and liberty of the gospel. Praise God I need no longer to have that awful fact to stare me in the face that it requires more to get into "the church" than into heaven!

This church salvation is not enough for me. And I am glad that Jesus said, "Ye are brethren," and that he did not say, "Ye are the Brethren church!" And I am glad, too, that he did say "upon this rock I will build my church"—not the "Brethren church!"

O, how few there are who get God's great thought in this matter! Remember that this term church is more properly translated "congregation." And I'm glad of another thing, and that is, that Christ said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Christ in the midst! Give him the chief place. Let him be first. He is the Author and Finisher of our faith, Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

As we get hold of this most vital truth in the divine economy we then allow God's power to find place in our lives until His Son is formed within us, and then we know the meaning of that joy which is "unspeakable and full of glory" and having that we can no longer glory in men, but we will rise unto the realm of true faith, and with Moses "endure as seeing Him who is invisible."

Realize this once and the church will no longer hold the pre-eminence. Jesus is still in the midst of the golden candlesticks. His message, not man's, should still be our chief concern.

THE MOURNERS' BENCH AND BAPTISM

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A revivalist, holding a meeting in the town where I lived, said that he thanked God that a man did not have to go to the mourners' bench, or be dipped in water three times to be saved. He placed baptism on an equality with the mourners' bench. After this he threw away baptism and exalted the mourners' bench, saying that baptism was not essential. Yet he insisted that those who desired salvation should go to the bench to get it. Some of my own members, wishing to be friendly, attended their services. They were placed on an equality with those in the world and invited to come forward to the bench. One of the prominent members of the bench church came to one of my deacons, a good man, and told him that he had not religion, and he should come to the mourners' bench

and get some. When my friend took exceptions to this statement, the bench man said he knew the church. The members were not converted, they had baptism but no religion. This is not the only case where our members have been urged to go to the mourners' bench to get religion. These things have led me to investigate the facts, and make some remarks on the mourners' bench.

Do the two stand on an equality to the divine law and the testimony?

1. Christ commanded baptism. He said, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Matt. 29:19.

There is the command for baptism. Where is any command for the "mourners' bench?"

There is none. Why then should that commanded by Christ be dragged from its lofty position and placed on an equality with that invented by man, then the two divorced, the divine rejected and the human exalted. Such teachers transgress the command of Christ by their traditions, and need to be taught the way of the Lord more perfectly.

2. The Holy Ghost connected baptism with repentance. On Pentecost the people said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter responded, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Acts 2:38.

The Holy Ghost had been promised by Christ, and was sent by the Father. He influenced Peter, hence the godhead, on that important occasion, linked baptism with repentance.

What God has joined together, no man has the right to put asunder. Where on Pentecost do we find the "mourners' bench," or where has the Holy Ghost linked repentance with the "mourners' bench." There is no such union in the Bible.

3. Christ connected baptism with faith as a condition of salvation: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Mark 16:16. Hence salvation depends on baptism as well as on faith. The two are divinely connected as conditions of salvation. Christ made no such connection with the "mourners' bench." Such an invention had no place in his plan of salvation. Christ's own baptism had the seal of God's approval, when he came from the water God said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matt. 3:17. But there is no place on record where God was said to be pleased with Christ for fulfilling all righteousness by going to a "mourners' bench."

Where did the trinity in God's word ever meet at a "mourners' bench?"

They did meet at Christ's baptism. Matt. 3:13-19.

4. The Apostolic church practiced baptism, but had no "mourners' bench." Baptism is connected with the conversions recorded in the book of Acts, but there is no record of any "mourners' bench." See conversions on Pentecost. Acts 2:37-41. In the city of Samaria. Acts 8:5-13. Of the Eunuch. Acts 8:35-39. Of Paul. Acts 9:3-8. Of Cornelius and the Gentiles. Acts 10:44-48. Of Lydia and her household. Acts 16:13-15. The jailor and his house. Acts 16:27-32. Of certain disciples at Corinth. Acts 19:1-5. The only case where baptism is not directly mentioned is the revival just after Pentecost. "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted." Acts 4:4. This is equivalent to Peter's assertion on Pentecost, "Repent and be baptized," for there could not have been two plans of salvation. Matthew Henry, the great Presbyterian commentator, says on this passage in Acts 4:4. "He only sayeth unto us, wash and be clean, wash and be Christian."

There is no mourners' bench in all the history of the planting and development of the Apostolic church.

5. The "mourners' bench" is a modern invention and innovation. It is about one hundred years old. Rev. Robert Todd, a presiding elder of the Methodist Episcopal church, and author of "Methodism of the Peninsular," a most remarkable book, says in it, "Probably the first Methodist preacher who ever awakened sinners to leave their places in the congregation and come forward and kneel at the 'altar' or communion rail, was Rev. Dr. Chandler. The innovation was introduced in 1799, at Bethel, near Chesapeake City, then called 'Back Creek church,' on Cecil circuit."

At this writing the "mourners' bench" lacks nearly nineteen hundred years of being Apostolic. It is too young to be divine, and yet men make it a condition of salvation. A preacher said, "There is no genuine religion to be had anywhere but at the 'mourners' bench'. What folly!

The "mourners' bench" innovation has the authority of Dr. Chandler, not Jesus Christ. It was introduced in Maryland, not in Palestine.

As Benjamin Franklin said, "Baptism came from Christ, the mourners' bench came from the saw mill."

"God hath made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions." Eccl. 7:29.

6. The Methodist Episcopal discipline teaches that the "mourners' bench" should be repudiated. The fifth article of religion, headed: "The Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation," says, "The holy scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation, so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor can be